

— THE HISTORIC —
**WOODSTOCK
ART COLONY**

Art in the Arthur A. Anderson Collection
at the
New York State Museum



A Lesson in Landscapes
**For Grades
K-5**



The New York State Museum
Cultural Education Center
222 Madison Avenue
Albany, New York 12230

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Contributors

Museum Director
Mark A. Schaming

Senior Historian/Curator, Art & Culture
Karen Quinn

Senior Historian/Curator, Social History
Ashley Hopkins-Benton

Director, Museum Education
Kathryn Weller

Exhibition Planner
Mehna Reach

Museum Editor
Jessica Fisher Neidl

Museum Educator
Kat Morehouse

Graphic Designer
Corianne Setzer

Cover Photo: *St. Lawrence River Sunset*, Birge Harrison, n.d.



ABOUT THESE LESSONS

This lesson is one of three that draw from The Historic Woodstock Art Colony: The Arthur A. Anderson Collection at the New York State Museum. This extraordinary collection represents a body of work that shaped art and culture in New York and forms a history of national and international significance. These lessons serve to aid educators in teaching students about a variety of factors related to art making, including specific methods and techniques, stylistic movements, and the context and impact of place in creativity.

The three lessons in this series include “A Lesson in Landscapes” and “A Lesson in Creating a Sense of Place,” both designed for grades K–5, and “A Lesson in Lithography & Printmaking,” which is designed for grades 9–12.

The New York State Learning Standards met in these lessons are included in each lesson. For more information on the standards visit www.nysed.gov/next-generation-learning-standards.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Woodstock, New York, is home to what is considered America’s first intentionally created, year-round arts colony—founded in 1902 and still thriving over one hundred years later. The Woodstock story begins when the artists’ colony called Byrdcliffe was established in 1902, focusing on the Arts and Crafts movement. In 1906 the Art Students League of New York, one of the country’s most important and progressive art schools, moved its summer school to Woodstock, bringing some 200 students annually to the area. Today, Woodstock continues to attract artists working in a variety of media and approaches, ranging from realism to abstraction—setting Woodstock apart from other art colonies that flourished for a limited time and were centered on a single style.

ABOUT THE ARTHUR A. ANDERSON COLLECTION

Arthur Anderson collected all kinds of things—minerals, reptiles, stamps—while he was growing up in Michigan, and he developed an interest in art when he was a teenager. Later, he was especially captivated by works created by artists working in the Historic Woodstock Art Colony.

Over three decades Arthur collected about 1,500 works of art by almost 200 artists. In 2018 he donated his entire collection to the New York State Museum, where, he wrote, “it can reside in perpetuity and be best cared for, used, and appreciated” by the public. Some one hundred of these works, representing a wide range of artists, styles, and subjects, were on display in an exhibition, *The Historic Woodstock Art Colony*, at the State Museum from November 10, 2018, to December 31, 2019. All of the artworks used in this lesson are in the collection of the New York State Museum.



A LESSON IN LANDSCAPES

FOR GRADES K-5

**THIS CURRICULUM IS ALIGNED WITH THE
NEW YORK STATE P-12 LEARNING STANDARDS.**

INTRODUCTION

Under the leadership of Birge Harrison, an instructor at the Summer School of the Art Students League, landscape was emphasized as much as the figurative tradition, and given Woodstock's bucolic setting in the Hudson Valley, the landscape became a focus and inspiration for many artists working there. This lesson focuses on the importance of landscape as a key artform, the physical space of Woodstock, New York, and the connection between person and place.

OBJECTIVES

This lesson encourages students to assess, respond to, and create landscape depictions. Students will compare and evaluate features of different works and make connections between people and place. They will create their own landscapes, planning a design and using a variety of lines, shapes, and details in their work. They will present and discuss their artwork using vocabulary and concepts introduced in this lesson.

FEATURED WORK

BIRGE HARRISON (AMERICAN, 1854–1929)

St. Lawrence River Sunset, n.d.

Oil on canvas

25 x 39 in.

This work is a Tonalist landscape featuring water and sky. Harrison depicts a snow-covered mountain slope in the foreground and the St. Lawrence River in the background. Use of a soft, limited color palette and painterly brushstrokes, which emphasize the oil paint medium, create a misty effect and utilize the reflective properties of both the river and the snow.



FEATURED WORK

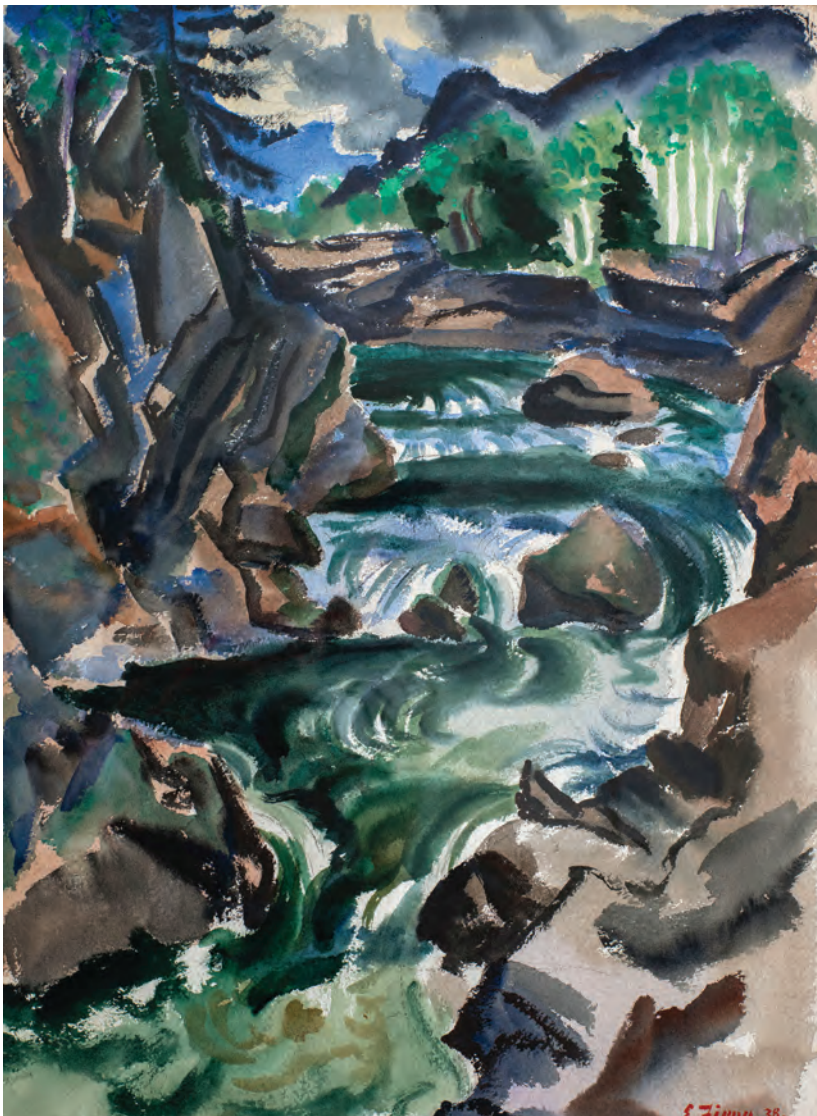
ERNEST FIENE (AMERICAN, BORN GERMANY, 1894–1965)

Mountain Stream, 1938

Watercolor on paper

23 x 16 in.

Unlike some landscapes in which the artist attempts to capture a view realistically, this artwork takes a modernist approach. Fiene used non-naturalistic jewel tones, and the influences of both the Fauvist and Cubist movements are evident in his depiction of a mountain stream.



FEATURED WORK

GEORGE BELLOWS (AMERICAN, 1882–1925)

House and Trees, n.d.

Pencil on paper

3½ x 5¼ in.

Bellows' drawing is a rough sketch of a landscape that both simplifies and deconstructs it. Artists may make multiple sketches of their subject while developing a composition for a final piece of artwork. Sketching is a form of note-taking that can also remind the artist of form, line, texture, and colors.



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

BIRGE HARRISON (1854–1929)

Born in Philadelphia and trained at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, Birge Harrison started his career as a figure painter before shifting his focus to landscape. Harrison traveled widely, to England, India, Australia, and California, before settling in Woodstock at the turn of the century. He worked in the Tonalist style, employing muted color palettes, often painting scenes at twilight, sunset, or dawn, which created a misty and moody effect.

Unlike many other landscape artists, Harrison did not work *en plein air*, or outdoors, but instead emphasized reliance on memory of color and details to paint the finished work in the studio. He said, “I believe that the final picture must always be painted from memory; and I seriously question if any really great landscape was ever wholly painted in the open.”

In his teaching role at the Art Students League, Harrison would go on to inspire many great artists of the time. He remained in Woodstock until his death, and the surrounding landscape of the area was the subject for many of his paintings.

ERNEST FIENE (1894–1965)

Ernest Fiene came to New York City from Germany in 1912 and took classes at the National Academy of Design, Beaux-Arts Institute of Design, and the Art Students League. He began in watercolors and landscapes, and his work in Woodstock shows his keen observation of and deep connection to the countryside, with details of high ground, valleys, hills, mountains, orchards, and farmhouses—oftentimes complex compositions with a natural palette.

Fiene was inspired by the modernist movements, and his work shifted and became modernist itself. His subject matter also shifted toward a specific subset of landscapes that included urban and industrial themes. Within his composition he was able to show the humanity of the space while deconstructing it into abstract shapes by merging the elements of realism and abstraction. With his brother, the sculptor Paul Fiene, Ernest also built artist studios in Woodstock.

GEORGE BELLOWS (1882–1925)

Ohio-born George Bellows showed artistic talent as a child and moved to New York City to study art in 1904. He was a member of the “Ashcan School,” a group of artists who captured the gritty and often chaotic scenes of American cities, urban neighborhoods, and working-class life. As such, his body of work includes a wide range of subjects, and people often figure largely in his scenes and landscapes.

Beginning in 1920, Bellows spent much of each year in Woodstock, where he built a home for his family. In addition to painting, he also made significant contributions to lithography.

VOCABULARY

landscape – A work of art in which the subject is an area of land, and its features are the primary focus. Landscapes often draw on natural scenery but can also depict an urban setting.

foreground – The part of a view that is nearest to the observer.

background – The area or scenery behind the main object.

linear perspective – Perspective based on how we see objects diminish in size as they recede in space, eventually to a vanishing point.

atmospheric perspective – Perspective based on how we see objects fade in color and blur in detail as they recede in space.

texture – The appearance of a surface or substance.

composition – The placement or arrangement of visual elements.

hue – Color or shade.

medium – The materials used to create a work of art, whether oil paint, watercolors, clay, marble, fabric, etc. *The plural of medium is media.*

monochromatic – Containing or using only one color or colors derived from a single hue extending to its different shades or tones.

limited palette – An artwork that uses only a handful of colors.

en plein air – French-language term meaning “outdoors,” applied to drawing or painting landscape subjects directly from life, not from memory. This approach became popular during the mid-nineteenth century in France.

Arts and Crafts movement – A decorative and fine arts trend that focused on traditional craftsmanship and simple forms, in reaction to late nineteenth-century industrialization.

Tonalism – Artistic style that emerged in the 1880s that relied less on faithfulness to visual reality and more on creating a mood, often through memory. A prevailing sense of quiet was achieved in Tonalist landscapes by depicting subjects in either dawn or evening light and with a range of delicate or muted colors, thus “tonal.”

Fauvism – An early twentieth-century style of painting with vivid expressionistic and non-naturalistic use of color.

Cubism – An early twentieth-century style and movement in art that shows all of the possible viewpoints of a person or object at once.

VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES

WARM-UP

Starting with a brainstorm activity, ask students:

- ▶ What is a landscape?
- ▶ What features/forms might you see in a landscape? (mountains, trees, water, sky, etc.)

GUIDED PRACTICE

To support class discussion and visual thinking strategies while exploring landscape paintings, have students think about the different elements found in Birge Harrison's *St. Lawrence River Sunset* (p. 3).

Encourage students to ask themselves:

- ▶ What is going on in this image?
- ▶ What do you see that makes you think that?
- ▶ What more can we find?
- ▶ Can you find evidence of people in the landscape?
- ▶ What colors are repeated?
- ▶ What evidence of time do you see in the painting? (Think about the title.)
- ▶ What do you feel, looking at this painting?

To discuss the process of creating landscapes, have students look at George Bellows' sketch, *House and Trees* (p. 5).

Encourage students to ask themselves:

- ▶ What is the benefit of sketching before painting?
- ▶ Is this step necessary in the process?
- ▶ What level of detail is in the sketch?
- ▶ What forms can we find?

VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Have students compare, either through group discussion or independently, using the attached worksheet, Birge Harrison's *St. Lawrence River Sunset* and Ernest Fiene's *Mountain Stream* (p. 3 & 4).

Encourage students to look at the compositions and ask and answer:

- ▶ How much of the image is sky?
- ▶ Where is the focus?
- ▶ Is anything moving?
- ▶ Is the landscape busy or minimalist?

Have students compare the use of color and ask and answer:

- ▶ What kind of colors make up the palette?
- ▶ How are colors repeated?
- ▶ Does the use of color impact the feeling or mood of the work?

This dialogue will help encourage the use of new vocabulary and understanding of art concepts. Once students are comfortable with the object and its visual elements, have them begin an art-making activity.

For further discussion or reflection, have students think about how places shape lives and communities. Students can examine related landscapes in the Historic Woodstock collection and consider how the physical space impacted and inspired the artists.

ARTMAKING ACTIVITIES

PART I: OUTDOORS – EN PLEIN AIR

Woodstock artists frequently used the local landscape as subject matter. It became increasingly popular to have classes paint outdoors directly from nature. Teachers would have their students walk miles into the countryside carrying their art supplies to paint landscapes. Take your students outside to make observations and artwork.



Materials: Pencil, Paper, Easel

Conduct the class outside and have students create two sketches of the landscape:

- ▶ Have students draw a rough sketch of the overall landscape, focusing on shapes and general forms. Students may be encouraged to use their hands as a frame before they start sketching to choose an area or view to focus on. Encourage students to make a clear background, middle ground, and foreground. Remind them of horizon lines and vanishing points.
- ▶ On a second sheet of paper, ask students to create several studies, focusing on detail and texture. For example, they may draw the texture found in the bark of a tree or the patterns found on a rock. Students should focus on elements found in the broader landscape they sketched earlier.
- ▶ For both sketches, students should take written notes on light, movement, and color. They will use these notes and sketches for the next activity.



Lesson Tip

- ▶ Before leaving the classroom, model for your students how to use line to create different textures found in nature.

ARTMAKING ACTIVITIES

PART II: INDOORS – MEMORY AND MOOD

Artists like Birge Harrison believed that landscapes should be painted from memory. Harrison would frequently sketch outdoors, but his paintings would be done in a studio, inspired by the memory and mood he felt at the location.



Materials: Pencil, Paper, Paint, Paintbrushes (Choose the painting medium that fits your available materials and instructional needs. This part of the activity works well with watercolors, tempera, or oil paints.)

- ▶ Instruct students to develop a full landscape in the chosen medium from their memory and the sketches they have made. Remind students that they should have a foreground, middle ground, and background and that objects in the foreground will be larger and have more detail than those in the background.
- ▶ Students can be asked to work in a specific style or instructed to think about what style they would like to create their landscape in: highly detailed and realistic, or more impressionistic.
- ▶ Challenge students to play with reflective properties of light on water.



Lesson Tips

- ▶ To extend this lesson, have students create two versions of the same view: one in a *limited palette* (see Harrison's *St. Lawrence River Sunset* p. 3) and one in a vibrant *open color palette* (see the jewel-toned palette used in Fiene's *Mountain Stream* p. 4).
- ▶ This is also a great time to review how to properly use and care for paint and brushes.



Wrap-up

- ▶ Have students reflect on why they included some aspects of the landscape and left out others.
- ▶ This is a good opportunity for students to present their artwork and to make connections and comparisons to the artwork of their classmates.

ARTMAKING ACTIVITIES

INDEPENDENT ACTIVITY: COMPARING LANDSCAPES

- ▶ Have students compare two pieces of artwork and record their observations on the worksheet attached to this lesson. Students should think about the use of line, color, shape, and pattern, along with any other elements you observed in these art works.

OPTIONAL CROSS-CURRICULAR EXTENSIONS

- ▶ **Math Extension:** Discuss lines and shapes found in nature. How are lines (parallel, perpendicular, diagonal, intersecting) used to create depth and texture in a landscape?
- ▶ **ELA Reading Extension:** Have students read *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George. The main character, Sam, lives alone in the Catskill Mountains for over a year. Are the descriptions of the environment something reflected in Historic Woodstock artwork?
- ▶ **ELA Writing Extension:** Have students write an Artist Statement. (See attached worksheet.)
- ▶ **Science Extension:** Make observations about the natural environment and your local biome. Look at the landscape paintings: What do you notice about the weather and seasons? Can you make a hypothesis about the time of day based on the sunlight?
- ▶ **Social Studies Extension:** Distinguish in the paintings human activities and human-made features from “environments,” i.e., physical features (land, air, water) that are not made by humans.

RELATED ARTWORKS



Bolton Brown (American, 1864–1936)
Valley and Sky (Tonalist Mountains), 1904
Oil on canvas
23 x 22 in.



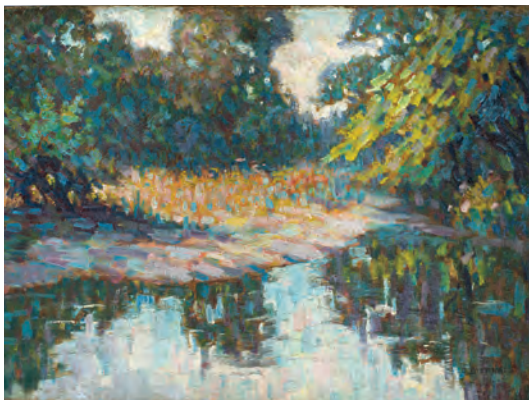
George Ault (American, 1891–1948)
Autumn Hillside, 1940
Gouache on paper
21 x 15½ in.



Frank Swift Chase (American, 1886–1958)
Catskills at Woodstock, 1927
Oil on canvas
22 x 28 in.



Eugene Speicher (American, 1883–1962)
Last of the Sun, 1913
Oil on board
12 x 16 in.



Otto Bierhals (American, born Germany, 1879–1944)
Trees and Lake, n.d.
Oil on board
5 x 6 in.

NEW YORK STATE LEARNING STANDARDS

Enduring Understanding

- ▶ **2.3:** People create, respond to, and interact with objects and places in ways that define, shape, enhance, and empower their lives.

Essential Questions

- ▶ **2.3:** How do objects and places shape lives and communities? How do artists and designers determine goals for designing or redesigning objects, places, or systems? How do artists and designers create works that effectively communicate ideas or influence people's lives?
- ▶ **10.1:** How does art attune people to their surroundings? How does artmaking contribute to awareness and understanding of one's life and the lives of others in the community?

Education Standards

- ▶ **VA:Cr1.2.1:** Use observation and exploration in preparation for making a work of art.
- ▶ **VA:Cr2.3.PK:** Create and tell about art that communicates a story about a familiar place or object.
- ▶ **VA:Cr2.3.1:** Create art that represents natural and constructed environments.
- ▶ **VA:Cr2.3.4:** Identify, describe, and visually document places or objects of personal significance.
- ▶ **VA:Cr2.3.5:** Document, describe, and represent constructed environments of regional or historical significance.
- ▶ **VA:Re7.1.2:** Recognize and describe visual characteristics of one's natural and constructed environments.
- ▶ **VA:Cn10.1.4:** Develop a work of art, based on observations of surroundings.

Interdisciplinary Connections

- ▶ Visual Arts, Science, ELA, Social Studies

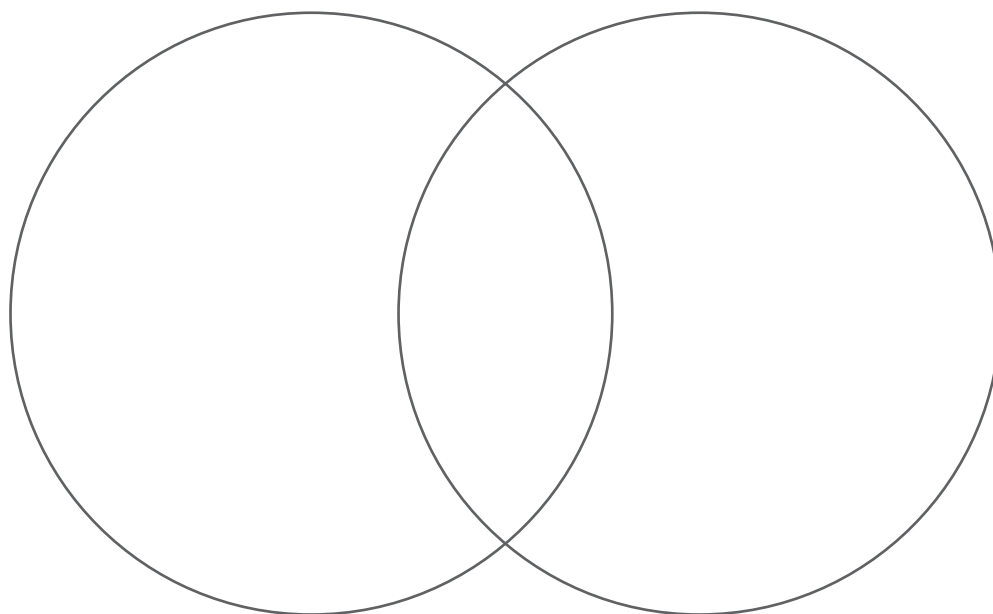
INDEPENDENT ACTIVITY

COMPARING LANDSCAPES

Compare two pieces of artwork. Think about the use of line, color, shape, and pattern, along with any other elements you observed in these art works.

Whose artworks are you comparing?

_____ & _____



Here are some ways they are the same:

Here are some ways they are different:

ELA WRITING EXTENSION

ARTIST STATEMENT

The title of my original artwork is:

Medium: _____

Mood: _____

Color Choices: _____

This is how I would describe my artwork to someone who could not see it:

The location that inspired this landscape was...

What I like best about it is...

Something I wish I had done is...
